

Beginning of

The theology of the Psalms

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PREFACE

This thesis is the outcome of a hint dropped by Dr. Bade as he was speaking to his Old Testament class. He happened to say that very little had been done on this subject and that it would make a good thesis topic.

The purpose of this paper is to present the theology that is reflected in the Psalms. It is an attempt to understand the theology of the Hebrews during the period in which the Psalms were written. Every effort that is within the writer's ability to understand the religious experiences of the psalmists is made. It is not intended that we should be to read into the Psalms many things that were not intended to be there. It will be difficult to refrain from interpreting the Theology of the psalmists in the light of present day Theology. To interpret the Psalms as they have been interpreted down through the centuries of the Christian Era is not the purpose of this paper. To read into the Psalms Theological meanings of which the psalmists never dreamed would

be to go far astray from the purpose of this study. In brief, then, my hope is to present outstanding religious ideas of the psalmists and the interpretations put upon them by the very earliest readers.

In order to fully understand these outstanding religious ideas one must understand the history and conditions of the time in which they were written. It is generally conceded that neither a great man nor a great idea can be fully understood until it is seen against its own background. The many and varied interacting factors that determine ones thoughts and actions must be understood before one can begin to fully appreciate the individual or his works. So it is with the Psalms. An understanding of the political, economic, climatic and geographical factors are necessary before the correct theological interpretation can be given to the Psalms. If the Psalms are ever to be of value to us we must understand their original purpose and use.

I propose, therefore, before going into the theology of the Psalms, to give a brief sketch of the historical background as well as the history of

the Psalms. The latter topic will deal with the problem of the age and authorship, the position of the Psalms in the Bible, the interesting story connected with giving the Psalms numbers and titles, and the still more interesting story of the formation of the Psalter.

The writer is aware that a great controversy has raged in recent years over the date and authorship of the Psalms; thus, in presenting the problem he will contrast the views of the most eminent scholars, and then draw his own conclusions.

Chapt. I

INTRODUCTION

Theology Dr. Buckham has defined theology as the
Defined interpretation of religious experience.

 This is a very broad definition and
many scholars both past and present would not accept
it because it does not definitely include God.

Theology is literally, the science which deals with
God or the gods. The latter definition cannot be
accepted while dealing with the Theology of the
Psalms because these early writers had not reduced
their religious feelings to a science or system.

The Psalms were emotional outbursts of joy and
sorrow that resulted from the struggles through which
the Jewish nation was passing. These outbursts were
spontaneous and unmediated. They seem to
interpret religious experiences intuitively rather
than by reason, because they are so spontaneous. I
think it is far better to accept Dr. Buckham's
definition of Theology because every man, who has a
deep religious experience, has also a theology.

R. J. Campbell says, "Religion is one thing and theology another, but religion is never found apart from a theology of some kind, for theology is the intellectual articulation of religious experience.

- - - - No sooner does a man attempt to understand or express his experience of the relations of God and the soul than he finds himself in possession of a theology."¹ In the final analysis then, theology is the attempt to understand and explain the universe in terms of its relation to God. This definition should satisfy the members of the old school as well as the new.

Historical Background
of the Period in
which the Psalms
were Written

It is no hidden secret among the scholars of the Old Testament that there is wide controversy as to when the Psalms were written. The opinion of these scholars place the writing of the Psalms anywhere from the time of

¹R. J. Campbell, "The New Theology", p. 1.

David 1010 B.C. on down to the period of the Maccabees about 150 B.C.. It is quite certain that the book of Psalms was not open to further additions after 63 B.C..¹ The age and authorship of the Psalms will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter of this paper. It is my purpose here to give the Psalms the widest possible period in which they might have been written in order that the sketch of the historical background may be adequate. On second thought, however, it would seem rather useless to sketch the history of Israel from 1000 B.C. down through the exile when it is definitely certain that the first collection of Psalms was not compiled until the time of Ezra and Nehemiah about 458 B.C..² Thus any theology in Psalms written previous to that date, that did not coincide with the theology of the day, would have been omitted in the process of revision. "That the Psalter was the hymn book of the Second Temple has long been recognized by scholars. The evidence of such usage is convincing. Psalms were

¹G. B. Gray, "Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible",
Psalms.
²Ibid.

sung regularly in connection with the daily burnt offering (Dan. 8:11ff). The musical annotations contained in so many of the superscriptions are most easily accounted for as instructions for the leaders of the temple choir. The Books of Chronicles give a large place to the "singers" in the temple ritual (I Chron. 9:4-34, 15:16-21), and speak positively in several cases of the use of musical instruments and psalms in public worship."¹

Let us review then in a brief manner the history of the Hebrews from the period of the Exile on and through the struggle of the Maccabees.

The long line of events that finally led to the overthrow of Israel and the carrying away into Babylon of many of its people had its beginning scores of years before the captivity took place. Isaiah, the most striking personality in Hebrew history next to Moses, counseled time after time with the Kings of Israel advising them to refrain from involving their nation in entangling alliance. Ahaz, who ruled over Israel c.736 - 727 B.C., was

¹J. M. P. Smith, "The Religion of the Psalms", p. 1, 2.

the first king to go against his advice, and formed an alliance with Assyria when his kingdom was somewhat threatened by the Syro-Ephraimitish coalition. By this move Ahaz became nothing more than an Assyrian vassal. The heavy taxes imposed upon his people brought great hardships to the Israelites, and at this point the decline of Judah began.

Hezekiah who followed Ahaz to the throne of Judah was quite eager to revolt from Assyria, but Isaiah restrained him for a time. In time, however, Hezekiah completed secret negotiations with Egypt and Ethiopia that resulted in a further weakening of his kingdom. In 702 he withheld the tribute money due Assyria and in about a year Sennacherib invaded Palestine, destroying forty-six fenced cities and many other smaller towns. From Jerusalem an enormous ransom was paid by Hezekiah in order to keep the city from being destroyed. Later three of Sennacherib's officers returned to Jerusalem, demanding that the city surrender, but Hezekiah steadfastly refused due to Isaiah's confidence in the protecting care of Jehovah. "The deliverance was one of three events in

Hebrew history which manifested most signally the grace and power of Israel's God".¹ Though Jerusalem was saved from destruction Hezekiah was far from successful in his attempt to throw off the Assyrian yoke. He continued to pay the annual tribute to Assyria. Manasseh, his successor, had to send materials for the rebuilding of a great arsenal. "Later Manasseh was carried in chains to Babylon as a hostage."²

The reign of Manasseh which covered a period of nearly 60 years, c.695 - 641, was marked by violent reactions against Isaiah's teachings. The common people had taken his promises of the triumph of Judah, and the overthrow of Assyria, in a literal sense. It seemed for a time as though all of the headway that had been gained in religion had been lost, for the people again practiced many of the old debased pagan rites. Through this entire period there was a body of faithful followers of the great prophet who cherished in their hearts his teachings, and it is they and their descendants who perhaps give us

1R. L. Ottley, "A Short History of the Hebrews",
p. 204.

²Ibid, p. 205.

the lofty thoughts contained in so many of the Psalms.

Amon, who succeeded Manasseh to the throne, was murdered after two years. His son, Josiah now took his place when only eight years old. Ten years later he undertook to reform the religious practices of his people on the lines already suggested by the prophets. "If we may judge from the testimony of the prophets Zephanizh and Jeremiah, the social and moral condition of Judah during the early years of Josiah's reign was terrible. It seems that faith in Jehovah was well-nigh dead."¹

The reforms of Josiah were due to several causes, the first one being the discovery of the Book of the Law. Then, too, for the last forty years of the Seventh Century the nations of western Asia had been in a continual state of disruption. Added to the already serious conditions the Scythians were beginning to descend from the Caucasus. After ravaging the Euphrates valley they poured into Palestine. "Though Judah among her hills escaped them - - - the inroads

¹R. L. Ottley, "A Short History of the Hebrews",
p. 207.

of this terrible foe was sufficiently remarkable to produce a strong feeling in favor of reformation."¹

Due to Josiah's reformation the Law became the basis of Israel's social and religious life. Jerusalem was established as the central sanctuary for Jewish worship. This in turn with the destruction of the many shrines helped to clear the way for a more spiritual type of worship.

The next chapter in the history of Israel was full of action and disappointment for the people of Jerusalem and Palestine. In 608 B.C. Josiah attempted to check the progress of Necho II of Egypt as he was marching through Southern Palestine on his way to annex the moribund territory of the Assyrian Empire. At Megiddo, in the plain of Esdraelon, the two armies fought a terrific battle with the result that Josiah was slain and Judah came under the dominance of Egypt.

All of the reforms that Josiah had labored to put into effect were thrown aside by his brother, Jehoiakim.

The Egyptian army continued on its march to

¹R. L. Ottley, "A Short History of the Hebrews,"
p. 208 - 209.

Assyria. At Carchimish on the banks of the Euphrates, Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptian army. Because of this decisive defeat Jehoiakim became the vassal of Nebuchadnezzar. Jehoiakim was loyal to his new lord until Necho of Egypt persuaded him to revolt. This was a sad and unwise step on his part, for immediately Nebuchadnezzar's army laid siege to Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar, successful in this siege, carried the new king, Jehoiachin, along with the flower of the population back to Babylon with him.

Zedekiah tried to carry on as king in Jerusalem. Under the able advice of Jeremiah he was making fair headway; but after nine years of progress Zedekiah plotted with the Egyptian King, Hophra, to throw off the yoke of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar sent a still more powerful army to Jerusalem. The city was captured, the temple destroyed and the walls broken down. Much loot was taken from the temple to Babylon along with Zedekiah, who was blinded and thrown in prison. Thus in the year 586 B.C. did the Great Babylonian Captivity begin.

The lot of the Hebrews during this period of

enforced exile was not an easy one. Taken from their homes and familiar surroundings, they were placed among strangers; many were sold into slavery and some found their way to the immense plains. For over fifty years¹ "in Babylon, the faithful remnant of those who had earnestly embraced the teachings of the prophets became the nucleus of a new people."² These people gathered on the canal and river banks under the leadership of Ezekiel and other lesser prophets. There they kept alive the hope that some day they would return to their beloved home.

During their exile many things happened to these bands of people that better fitted them for the hard tasks that were to be theirs when they returned. They became strong and hardened to physical labor. They developed to a remarkable degree the idea that they were a chosen people, and that the period of exile was merely further preparation for the carrying out of a divine mission. During the period there also grew up among the exiles a tremendous appreciation of

¹A Standard Bible Dictionary, "Chronology of the Old Testament.

²R. L. Ottley, "A Short History of the Hebrews", p. 221.

the value of Israel's sacred writings. It was at this time that they collected and studied their writings of the past.

Just as the people of Israel were losing hope of ever returning to their homeland there appeared in their midst the "Great Unknown Prophet" who gave them new life and hope. It was he who saw in Cyrus of Persia the one who was to redeem Israel. In 538 Cyrus captured Babylon and gave permission for the Israelites to return to Jerusalem. "They were allowed not only to carry with them the sacred vessels which had been taken from the temple, but were expressly encouraged by the edict of Cyrus to rebuild the ruined sanctuary at Jerusalem."¹ It is said that over 40,000 people returned to Jerusalem with the first band. They spent the first year or so in rebuilding their own homes, re-erecting the altar of burnt-offering and re-establishing their traditions. The occasion for the laying of the foundation stone of the Second Temple was a joyous one as recorded in

¹R. L. Ottley, "A Short History of the Hebrews", p. 229.

Ezra 3:10ff.. A quarrel soon broke out with the Samaritians whose offer of cooperation to help re-build the temple was refused by the Jews. This opposition and short-sightedness of the Jews delayed the re-building until Haggai and Zachariah prodded them into action sixteen years later.

By 516 the temple was completed and dedicated and with the period that followed came much activity on the part of the priests and officers to collect or produce suitable songs and readings for the ceremonies of the temple services.

Little by little now we find the Jews gaining back for Jerusalem some of its older splendor. Under Ezra in 458 an attempt was made to strengthen the purity of the religion of the people and also to re-build the walls of the city. He succeeded to some degree with his religious reforms, but the re-building of the wall was hastily stopped by the Persians whose suspicions had been aroused by the Samaritans.

Thirteen years later Nehemiah in 445 B.C. arrived from Babylon to rekindle the hopes of the reform party. Upon his arrival, with the stirring words found in

Neh. 2:12¹, he set to work to re-build the wall which was completed under his personal direction in a very short time. Ezra now re-appeared on the scene, and was successful in securing the adoption of the Law book as the guide of the Jews from that time on. These steps welded the loyal Jews into a harmonious community and paved the way for Judaism.

"In the period under review the external fortune of the Jews was at low ebb. Complaints of oppression, of persecution, of the scoffing of the proud, are almost a common place of the Psalms, many of which are from this period. But along with these complaints we find testimonies that God is near the humble and that He sustains those who trust Him. In this experience the pious found the reward of obedience, though this reward was not one upon which they had fixed their hopes."²

The control of Syria and Egypt passed into the

¹Neh. 2:12, "Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire; come let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that there be no more reproach."

²H. P. Smith, "Old Testament History", p. 412.

hands of Alexander the Great after the battle Issus in 334 B.C., in which the Greek army succeeded in defeating the Persians.

"We pass over the events and confusion of the succeeding years, remembering only that the battle of Ipsus, in the year 301, put an end to the contentions of the immediate successors of Alexander: Palestine fell to Ptolemy of Egypt, and until 198 Judea remained an Egyptian province."

"This century is the happiest period that Judea experienced after the loss of her independence. The very first Ptolemy favored the Jews in every respect. Ptolemy even endeavored to persuade the Jews to settle in Egypt proper."¹

Though the Egyptians had treated the Jews kindly, they welcomed the rule of Syria because the Egyptian state had fallen into such a condition of decay under the fourth Ptolemy.

At first the Syrian government did everything in its power to win the hearts of its Jewish subjects.

¹C. H. Cornill, "History of the People of Israel", pp. 170 - 171.

"But how soon the picture was to be changed! When thirty years had passed over the country Judea was engaged in a desperate struggle with Syria for life and death."¹ During this struggle the Jews were threatened with extinction. It was the plan of Antiochus Euphronius to exterminate Judaism root and branch. This he set out to accomplish by first attacking their religion. He ordered their sacred writings destroyed, he forbade the exercise of their religion on pain of death, and on Dec. 25, 168 B.C. he desecrated the temple at Jerusalem and had a sacrifice offered to the Greek god, Zeus. This, so to speak, was the striking of the match that set the box of fire-crackers going. "Mattathias an aged and respected priest in the little city of Modein slew the captain who was sent to Hellenize it. He tore down the altar of Zeus and cried with a loud voice, 'Whosoever is zealous for the law and will remain faithful to the covenant, let him follow me!'"² Mattathias marched with those who joined him to the

¹C. H. Cornill, "History of the People of Israel",
p. 174.

²Ibid., p. 192.

mountains. A year later the brave man died and his son Judas Maccabaeas, carried on the struggle. Against great odds he won many victories. He fought only for religious liberty and it was due chiefly to his efforts that soon after his death and that of his brother, Jonathan, complete religious freedom was restored. The Maccabean revolt lasted for over twenty-seven years and involved the lives of many people. As a result of this revolt Judaism was again purified and a stronger faith in God was established.

With the fairly successful outcome of the Maccabean revolt let us close this section of the paper.

The Problem
of Age and
Authorship

The problem of the age and authorship of the Psalms seems to be one of the most difficult problems in the Old Testament. Counting the many poems that are found outside of the Psalter, over one hundred psalms are ascribed to definite authors, the ninetieth psalm is ascribed to Moses, seventy-three to David and two to Solomon (77 and 127). And yet

says Dr. McFadyen¹, "there are not a few scholars who maintain that, so far from any psalm being mosaic, or even Davidic, there is not a single pre-exilic psalm in the Psalter, and the less radical critics do not allow more than thirty or forty. The question must be settled entirely upon internal evidence, as the superscriptions, definite as they often are, are never demonstrably reliable, while some of them are plainly impossible." This point of view is held by S. R. Driver, J. M. P. Smith, G. B. Gray, T. K. Cheyne, Wellhausen, Reese and others.

Traditional Views	Let us turn for a moment to the Jewish tradition in regard to the authorship of the Psalms. "Jewish tradition does not make David the author of all the psalms; but, as he was regarded as the founder and legislator of the Temple psalmody, (I Chron., Ezra 3:10, Neh. 12:36, 45); so he was held to have completed and arranged the whole book, though according to Talmudic tradition he
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¹McFadyen, "An Introduction to the Old Testament", p. 245.

incorporated psalms by ten other authors, Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman, Jeduthun, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah. With this it agrees that the titles of the psalms name no one later than Solomon, and even he is not recognized as a psalmodist by the most ancient tradition, that of the LXX, which omits him from the title of Ps. 127 and makes Ps. 72 to have been written not by him but of him. The details of the tradition of authorship show considerable variation; according to the Talmudic view Adam is author of the Sabbath Psalm, 92, and Melchizedek of Ps. 110, while Abraham is identified with Ethan, the Ezrahite Ps. 89. But, according to older Jewish tradition all anonymous pieces are by the same hand as the nearest preceeding psalm whose author is named."¹

In the Christian Church there was no consensus of opinion of the Fathers, and no decision as to the authorship of the Psalms was reached by the Church, yet the traditional opinion in the early and medieval

¹William Robertson Smith, "Encyclopedia Britanica" 11th Edition, Psalms.

Church was that David was its author.

Among the Reformers Calvin looked upon Ezra as the editor of the book of Psalms; but David was held to be the author of the entire book by the Majority of people until the eighteenth Century.¹

Present-Day "With the rise of the Higher Criticism,
Opinion the traditional opinion as to the
 Davidic authorship of the Psalter was
questioned, and soon abandoned by all critics. At
first editorship by Ezra and the Davidic authorship
of only those Psalms which have David in their titles
was proposed, but subsequently internal evidence
showed this to be impossible, so that critical opinion
gradually came to the result that the final editorship
of the Psalter could not have been earlier than the
Maccabean period, and that David wrote few, if any, of
the Psalms, the most of them being post-exilic."² Then
Dr. Briggs goes on to say that the Higher Criticism of

¹Charles A. Briggs, "The International Critical
Commentary", p. LVI.

²Ibid., p. LVII.

the Psalms must depend chiefly upon the internal evidence of the Psalms. The titles are valuable in so far as they give us a hint of the different stages in the development of the Psalm and the use that has been made of it. It is quite certain that the titles are the product of the hands of the editors and were not attached to the original Psalm. Thus one can see that, though the titles help a little in ascribing the date and authorship of the Psalm, the Higher Critics must depend mostly on the internal evidence. "The poetic form and spirit, the subject matter in its relation to the development of religious faith, and morals, the slight traces of historic circumstances and conditions, citations from earlier writings, the use of words and phrases in their relation to the development of the Hebrew language and literature,"¹ are some of the means by which the Old Testament scholars are able to assign within certain limits the dates of the various Psalms.

The most common method of dating, used by

¹Charles A. Briggs, "The International Critical Commentary", pp. LVII and LVIII.

commentators in general, is the linguistic method. The words in a piece of literature are tabulated and compared with the words used in other books. This is a valid method if there is a sufficient amount of securely dated material from which to start, and a literature sufficient to give a fairly large vocabulary. These conditions are only partly present in the case of the Psalms. The vocabulary is very small and abounds in stock phrases, it is part of a technical ritual; and more than any other book it has been re-written and modernized so often that from a mere study of words it is impossible to determine their original literary connection.¹

Thus it seems that the only reliable methods left to judge the date of a Psalm by are: first to compare the subject matter with the racial development of religion and morals; and second to compare the subject matter with historical circumstances and conditions. Judging the Psalms then in this light, many of the Old Testament scholars are willing to say

¹J. P. Peters, "Harvard Theological Review", V. IX, p. 42.

that there are no pre-exilic Psalms, and that many of them were written during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. J. M. P. Smith has the following interesting note concerning the Davidic authorship of the Psalms. He says,¹ "Since David was both a poet and a deeply religious man, and since a tradition of Psalm writing has attached itself to his name, the probability is that he actually did write some religious songs. It would be strange if he had not done so. It may be that some of his Psalms are in the Psalter. But if so, they have undergone so great a change that David himself would have great difficulty in identifying his literary offspring. Hence it is little more than a waste of time to attempt to discover the original Davidic element in the Psalter. The really important question after all is, What is the meaning and value of the Psalms themselves? Truth and value are not dependent upon the question of origin, but upon the degree of success with which the Psalms have functioned in the religious experience of the

¹J. M. P. Smith, "The Religion of the Psalms", p. 60.

past and will continue to function in the experience of coming generations."

It is worth while to consider the suggestion that possibly many of the Psalms were in existence in earlier times, and, that when they came to be used in the services of the second temple, they had to be revised because of the crude theology that they expressed. Then, too, as the conceptions of religion changed, these same Psalms underwent still further revision in order that they might express more adequately the religion and the spirit of the times. This thought is illustrated to some extent in Ps. 44 by G. A. Barton.¹

There is one additional point, brought out by Cheyne in connection with the traditional Davidic authorship of the Psalms, that is worth considering, for it seems quite plausible. He says, "The true cause of the phenomenon was that the name Jeduthun or Jedithun was difficult to transcribers, and, supposing that the corrupt word, which lay before

¹G. A. Barton, "The Religion of Israel", p. 199.

him in the different headings, must represent some well-known name, the last editor converted it, wherever it occurred, into Le Dawid, without thinking of the historical improbability of the view of David this produced."¹

The Position of The Psalms in the Bible The triparte arrangement of the Hebrew Old Testament indicates the three great divisions of Law, Prophets, and Writings or Hagiographa into which it is divided. The Book of Psalms belongs under the classification of the Writings or Hagiographa. The Psalter is the most important book of the third division, and it is placed at the beginning of the Hagiographa or Kethubim in the Hebrew Bible.² "But its position has not always been the same. In the MSS of the German type, which our printed editions follow, the Psalms stand first, followed by Proverbs and Job - - -. The order of the books of the Old Testament

¹Chayne, "The Book of Psalms", p. LII.

²H. E. Ryle, "The Canon of the Old Testament", p. 137.

in our English Bibles is that which has come to be adopted in the Vulgate during the sixteenth century. It corresponds more nearly to the arrangement of the LXX found in the Vatican MSS, than to that of the Hebrew, but differs from it in placing Job before the Psalter instead of after the Song of Songs."¹

The Titles and Numbering of The Psalms	The Psalter is generally regarded as being composed of five different collections of Psalms which are in reality Psalters within the Psalter.
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"To nearly all the Psalms in the first three books, and to some of those in the fourth and fifth books, are prefixed titles, designating either the character of the poem, matters connected with its musical setting, its liturgical use, the author or perhaps the collection from which the Psalm was taken, or the historical occasion for which it was written or which it illustrates."² These various titles may occur separately or in combination with others; often the

¹Kirkpatrick, "The Cambridge Bible", The Psalms,
p. XIII.

²Ibid., p. XVII.

meaning of the title is obscure, and the scholars are forced to conjecture what its meaning may be.

Although Mowinckel is the latest and best authority in regard to the history of Psalm titles I propose to follow Kirkpatrick¹ because his account is in English while that of Mowinckel is in German.

The term, Mizmor, which means Psalm is found in fifty-seven different titles of the Psalter and with few exceptions is either preceded or followed by the author's name. The verb from which Mizmor is derived appears originally to have meant "to make music".

The title, Shir, which is generally translated, "song" or "canticle" occurs thirty times in the Psalm titles, and is generally preceded or followed by Mizmor.

The meaning of Maskil though obscure has been thought to mean, "a didactic psalm". Ewald interpreted it to mean, "a skilful psalm".

Shigyaion is the title given to Psalm VII and

¹Kirkpatrick, "The Cambridge Bible", Psalms, pp. XVII and XVIII.

it probably denotes a particular style of poetry or music.

The term Prayer is used for five Psalms (17, 86, 90, 102, and 142) and the title, a Praise, is used only for one Psalm.

Among the titles connected with the musical setting or performance we find the one, To the Chief Musician, prefixed to fifty-five Psalms, most of which are found in the first three books.

The term, on Neginoth, occurs six times in the Psalter, and perhaps means, "on stringed instruments". The title indicates that the Psalm was to be accompanied by stringed instruments, perhaps by these only. Other similar terms are, "Upon Nehiloth", and "Upon Alamoth", which mean respectively "upon wind instruments", and, "for maiden's voices". The wind instrument used was most probably the flute.

There are a few titles of the Psalms that refer to the special liturgical use to which the Psalm is put. "In the days of the Second Temple a special Psalm was sung at the offering of the morning sacrifice."¹

¹Kirkpatrick, "The Cambridge Bible", p. XXIV.

In the light of this explanation we can understand Psalm 92 which is entitled, "A Song for the Sabbath Day". Other Psalms are assigned to the first, third, fourth, and fifth days of the week.

The titles of Psalms 38 and 70 indicate that they were sung at the offering of incense.

Fifteen Psalms have as their titles, "A Song of Degrees", "A Song of the Ascents" or of "Going up." There have been numerous explanations for these titles and the most likely one is that these Psalms were sung as the people were making their pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the time of the great festivals.

We have in another section of this Introduction taken up the titles that relate to the various authors, so we will not repeat them here.

To a great extent, then, we may conclude that the titles, thus far examined, help one to understand the use to which the Psalm was put in the services of the Second Temple. Let us further keep in mind that modern scholars are forced to discount the value of the titles that have to do with the authorship when it is connected with the occasion of the Psalm.

The Formation of The Psalter Most writers are of the opinion that the Psalter represents many centuries of growth. First the individual Psalms had a long history of change and growth. Then the various minor and major Psalters passed through many changes during the Persian and Greek periods. It is definitely certain that the present Psalter was finally arranged and edited some time in the middle of the second century B.C..

It seems to me that there are two outstanding reasons why the Psalms underwent these changes. First of all the Psalms were used in the services of the Second Temple, and though many of us can sing, in a beautiful hymn, a theology that our reason revolts against, we cannot sing the song if the theology is too crude. Thus it is that, "many revisions in the Psalms took place to connect the Psalm with a new theology or a new thought."¹ We see this process at work in our hymn books today and there is every reason to believe that the

¹J. P. Peters, "Harvard Theological Review", V. IX. p. 51.

process operated the same way in the days of old. The second reason for the revision of the Psalms is because many of them were written for specific occasions. As time went on, and the occasions no longer fitted new situations, a revision was necessary in order to make the Psalm valid and useful in its present setting.

It is not the purpose to trace here the development of individual Psalms for that would not only take too long, but it is doubted by some authorities as to whether this can be done with any degree of certainty. It is the purpose of this section to trace briefly the general development of the Psalter, as it is now composed, into five smaller collections.

Dr. S. R. Driver gives the most understandable account of the formation of the Psalter in his book, "An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament"¹. He says, "That the Psalter is not the work of a single compiler, but was formed gradually

¹S. R. Driver, "An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament", p. 371.

out of pre-existing smaller collections of Psalms, appears from many indications. More than one Psalm occurs in a double recension, the two differing so slightly that both are not likely to have been incorporated by a single hand. Thus Ps. 53 equals Ps. 14; Ps. 70 equals Ps. 40:13-17, etc." Another indication of this is found in the fact that Psalms ascribed to the same author are found in the other collections. Also a collector, "knowing that there were still eighteen Davidic Psalms to follow, would scarcely have closed Book II (72:20) with the words "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." The same conclusion follows from the remarkable manner in which the use of the Divine names varies in the different parts of the Psalter. In Book I Jehovah occurs 272 times and Elohim only 12 times; in Book II Jehovah is used 30 times and Elohim 164 times, but in 84-89, Jehovah 31 times and Elohim 7; in Book IV the term Jehovah alone is used as in the case for Book V except in Psalm 108 which is repeated from Psalms 57, 60 and 144." Now, Driver says, "The exceptional preponderance of Elohim over

Jehovah in Book II cannot be attributed to a preference of the authors of these Psalms for the former name. It must be due to the fact that Book II and Psalms 73-83 have passed through the hands of a compiler who changed "Jehovah" of the original authors into "Elohim". The reason of this change probably being that the compiler lived when the latter term was preferred."

Now what definite steps in the growth of the present Psalter are traceable? Professor Elmer A. Leslie¹, following the lead of Dr. George Buchanan Gray, traces the present Psalter through its interesting stages of development. These stages are as follows:

1. "The composition of a Davidic collection with a doxology at the close, 3-41."
2. "The compilation of a second Davidic collection with a doxology at the close, 51-72."
3. "The compilation of a collection entitled 'of the Sons of Korah', likewise probably a guild of Temple singers (II Chron. 20:19), 42-49. Peters suggests that this collection originally belonged to the Sanctuary at Dan."

¹Elmer A. Leslie, "Abbingdon Commentary", The Psalms.

- . . "The redaction of an Elohistie Psalter, 42-83, out of psalms that were derived from the second, third and fourth collections. The editor quite generally, but not consistently substituted 'Elohim' for 'Jehovah'."
- . "The Elohistie Psalter was enlarged by the addition of 84-89."
- . "The compilation of a collection entitled 'Songs of the Ascents', 120-134."
- . "The compilation of 90-150 around these 'Songs of Ascents' and other similar collections."

W. R. Smith maintains that these steps finally culminated in the three separate collections already mentioned. These collections were in turn redivided to make five in order that the Psalter might conform to the five-fold division of the Penteteuch.

Chapt. II

THE THEOLOGY OF THE PSALMS

Opening One author has enchantingly said, "Books
Remarks about the Psalms come and go; the Psalms
 go on forever. They belong to the
permanent literature of the race because they express
easily and adequately the great emotions of mankind.
They display a faith that passes knowledge, an
invincible confidence in the goodness of God that
survived successive shocks testing it to the utter-
most. The genuine heart-felt religion of the Psalter
has never failed to kindle the spirit of the faithful."¹
It is because the Psalms live and have value today
that we spend time in studying them.

Just a word of caution now before the central
task of this thesis is undertaken. We should not
expect to find in the Psalms the very latest religious
development of the Hebrews put forth. The Psalms were

¹J. M. P. Smith, "The Religion of the Psalms", p. V.

a popular manual of devotion and not a book for the furtherance of progressive thought. Fellowship is found in common aspiration rather than with the drinking in of new thought. The bringing in of new theological and philosophical questions into the songs of the church would have been disastrous to the harmony of the worshippers.¹ It must also be kept in mind that there is no closed and coherent system of theology in the Psalms, therefore, this part of the paper will present the leading religious ideas and attempt to note the differences wherever they occur.

"The Psalter is the best embodiment of the religious spirit of ancient Judaism that has survived. The stark simplicity and candor, the utter honesty and unsullied sincerity of the psalmists cannot be too strongly emphasized." Smith then goes on to say,² "If God tries you tell him so." The psalmist makes no attempt to conceal anything from God. They confided everything in him by pouring out their

¹J. M. P. Smith, "The Religion of the Psalms", p. 15.
²J. M. P. Smith, "The Psalms", p. 255.

hearts to him. Their sins, their anger, their hopes and fears are all laid before Him. In this outpouring of their souls the psalmists are conscious of the goodness of God and have no thought of him as a menacing specter of horror.

A - Characteristic Elements of the Conception of God

The names of the Deity In order to gain a better understanding of the idea of God in the Psalter, the consideration of the names of God is necessary. Piepenbring says¹, "In the Old Testament, names, least of all proper names, are not arbitrary designations; they denote the characteristics of the persons or things to which they are applied. This is the case with the names of God; they tell what God is."

Now if we could have some way of knowing all of the thinking that is back of the terms Jahweh and Elohim, or back of the composite term Jahweh Elohe Sebaoth found in Psalm 70, the task of writing this

¹C. H. Piepenbring, "The Theology of the Old Testament", p. 99.

thesis would be greatly lessened. So often a term, having a very definite meaning in its beginning turns out to have as many interpretations as there are people to interpret it. Thus to know the Theology of the Psalms one must deal directly with the conceptions of God as they are expounded in the Psalter itself. It is to this end that the balance of this paper is directed. It is an attempt to explain the meaning of the terms Jahweh and Elohim as the psalmists thought of them.

The Wrath of God The main arguments seriously entertained concerning the canonicity of the Psalms were the arguments of the moral problem that the imprecatory Psalms presented. It is known that the Jewish Church fathers believed in a God that was gentle, kind and just; and yet many of the Psalms reflect a God capable of becoming angry and full of wrath. To this question Briggs says, "These objections are invalid because they fail to apprehend that these imprecations and protestations belong necessarily to the earlier stages of religion and to certain historic

situations where they have their essential propriety."¹ Though the Psalms have the intensity of lyric passion the imprecations are not so frequent in the Psalms as in the Law and the Prophets. Then, too, these imprecations are vitally connected with the welfare of Israel. It is the cry of a people who are looking for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. They call upon God to crush his deadly foes in order that his religion may survive and accomplish its sacred mission in the world. It is particularly significant that three of the strongest protests of this kind are found in Psalms 22, 40 and 69. These are the Psalms which Jesus used in giving vent to his feelings in his most trying hours. Listen to a section of Ps. 69 vs. 23-29 as the psalmist calls down the wrath of God upon his enemies after he has fearlessly poured out in a long list his troubles.

"May their table become a snare before them,
And their peace-offerings a trap.

¹C. A. Briggs, "The International Critical Commentary",
p. XCVII.

" May their eyes be so darkened that they cannot
see,
And make their loins tremble constantly.

Pour out upon them thy wrath,
And let thy hot anger overtake them,

May their encampment be a waste;
In their tents may there be no inhabitant.

For him whom thou hast smitten they persecute,
And unto the pain of thy victim they add.

Add guilt to their guilt,
And let them not enter into thy justification.

May they be blotted out from the book of life,
And not be inscribed among the righteous."

It is very evident that the God of the writer of this Psalm is not on the same high moral level as the God of the writers of other Psalms; who as they sing praises to God call Him good, merciful and just.

In order to understand the imprecations in the Psalter it is necessary to know the situations that called them into being. According to Briggs the imprecations of the Psalter belong to four historic situations:¹ the persecutions of Jeremiah and his associates by those who were pushing the national

¹Briggs, "The International Critical Commentary",
The Psalms, CI.

religion to destruction, Ps. 52, the brutal cruelty of Edom and Moab toward the Jews at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, Ps. 137, the treachery of Sanballat and Tobiah, Neh. 2-6, which threatened the very existence of the congregation of the Restoration. The imprecations of Neh. 4:4-5, 6:14 and 13:29 are in accord with those of Pss. 9:20-21, 10:15, 69:23-29 and 83:10-18. The persecution of Antiochus, which aimed at the extermination of the worshipers of Yahweh, was the fourth of these historic situations. To this period the majority of the imprecations belong, though Briggs says that they are glosses in older Psalms. "Thus all the imprecations", says Briggs¹, "are upon such treacherous hypocrites, traitors, and blood thirsty enemies of the Kingdom of God. Jesus himself pronounces imprecations upon those who aimed at nothing else than the willful destruction of the true religion."

Our souls rebel not against the imprecations so

¹Briggs, "The International Critical Commentary",
The Psalms, p. CI.

much as against the form that they took. God is invoked to bring physical suffering not only to the enemies but upon their wives, daughters and unborn children. And yet Kirkpatrick points out¹, that before the time of David the individual men took the matter of vengeance in their own hands while in the Psalms the writers are willing to leave this vengeance to God because they believe in his cause.

Dr. Bade suggests that the psalmists called upon God to avenge the wrongs done to them because they were powerless to inflict any punishment upon their tormenters. This seems to be a far better explanation because it is more in accord with human nature and Jewish nature in particular. We know that the Jewish people were often incapable of avenging the wrongs they suffered. This was particularly true during the reign of Antiochus.

¹Kirkpatrick, "The International Critical Commentary", p. LXXII.

His "Mightiness: Keeping in mind the fact that
 God Fills His the Psalter was the hymn book
 World of the Jewish people as a whole,
 we cannot expect to find abstract
 and philosophical conceptions of God in it. The
 conceptions that we do find are those of the common
 man and yet for the most part they are lofty and
 exalted.

First of all the God of the Psalms is exalted
 and praised because he is the creator of the universe.
 The sun, stars, moon and heavens owe their being to
 him, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy
 fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast
 ordained."¹ God is also the creator of man, "For
 thou hast made him (man) but little lower than God,
 and crownest him with glory and honor".² Not only
 is God the creator of the world and man but he is
 the ruler of this world, Yahweh is the Lord of the
 thunder.³ He is the God of history for he rules the
 thoughts of men from the beginning.⁴ Not only did

¹Ps. 19:3-4
³Ps. 29:5ff

²Ps. 19:5
⁴Ps. 22:29, 24:1

God create men and animals but he provides for their care continually.¹

Though the transcendental aspects of God's nature, such as omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence are present in the Psalms they are not dwelt on to any great length nor are they emphasized strongly.

Surely the God of the Psalmists is eternal, all powerful and everywhere present,² but they prefer to present Him to us as a very human sort of God. He is presented in the Psalter as an incomparably great man and is invested with the attributes of man even to their weaknesses. Despite these weaknesses the Jews considered their God far superior to all other beings as is manifested in the extracts from the following Psalms:

All the gods of the nations are nonentities,
But Yahweh made the heavens.

Our God is in the heavens,
He has done whatsoever he pleased.
Their images are silver and gold
The work of men's hands.

¹Ps. 104:10-30

²Ps. 90:1-4, 135:6, 94:8-11.

³Ps. 96:5.

Mouths have they, but they speak not.
 Eyes have they, but they see not.
 Ears have they, but they hear not. - - -

Like unto them shall be those who make them,
 Whosoever trusteth in them.¹

Psalm 139 shows more clearly than any other the progress of religious thought. It is remarkable for the consciousness, which its author manifests, that God's presence pervades the world.

It is true that the psalmists world is not as large as ours, but, says Barton,² "it was a much larger world than that known to the men of early Israel." David thought that Yahweh was the God of Palestine and that he was only one among many Gods. (I Sam. 26:19). The psalmists' religious faith kept pace with the enlargement of knowledge. To them God filled his world.

This great advance in the conception of God can be appreciated more fully by turning to I Sam. 26:19 and II Kings 5:17ff. In the first reference David thinks that Yahweh was the God of Palestine and that

¹Ps. 115:3-8.

²G. A. Barton, "The Religion of Israel", p. 211.

other Gods ruled the territory outside of Palestine. Naaman in II Kings 5:17ff considers it necessary to transport some of the soil of Palestine to Syria in order to worship Jehovah. "The author of Psalm 139 has left all such conceptions far behind. The all seeing eye of Yahweh and his creative power fills, in his belief, the whole world."¹

The idea of God came to mean so much to the Hebrews that it in turn was the one distinguishing feature of their religion. It was held by them not only as an article of intellectual belief but it so became a part of their life that it was of great devotional help to them. In time the Jews came to identify themselves with Yahweh to the extent that they loved what he loved and hated what he hated. This thought in turn led the Jews to identify themselves as the "Chosen People" of God.

His Goodness	Though Yahweh is thought of in some of the Psalms as being the God of the
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¹G. A. Barton, "The Religion of Israel", p. 210.

world, his attributes of love, goodness and tenderness are thought to be reserved for the people of Israel. In this respect the book of Jonah and Isaiah (40-66) have a much more advanced idea, for they were certain in their convictions that the love and tenderness of Yahweh was meant for mankind at large. The Second Isaiah laughs to scorn those who think that God is the God only of the Jews. He conceives God as being Greater than all the nations, so lofty is his conception of Him.

Yahweh of the Psalms being primarily concerned with the welfare of his chosen people we find the psalmists praising Him for his loving kindness,¹ goodness,² and mercy.³ He is all that we would expect a father to be to his children and yet the psalmist prefers to call Him Shepherd. The outstanding example of this being the familiar twenty-third Psalm. That the singers and the writers of the Psalms believed in the infinite goodness of God must be inferred from the general character of the "praise

¹Is. 55:7.
³Ps. 59:17.

²Ps. 25:7-8.

Psalms". Time after time do they put their trust in Him and sing forth his praise because he is great and good.

His Humanity Whenever the phrase, "he is human", is used most of us think immediately of the so called weaknesses of the flesh. At least the person spoken of is a limited and finite being. The psalmists in attributing human characteristics to God did not intentionally mean to diminish the greatness of their God. As has been said before, the Psalms were used by the common people in the services of the Temple. The common people of our own day do not as a rule think in vague abstractions, but in concrete terms wherever it is possible. Recall for a moment the kind of a God that is pictured in "Green Pastures" by some of the negroes of today. There are two reasons why God is pictured as he is. First it is next to impossible for uneducated and illiterate people to think in abstractions. Then, too, the devotional nature of such people requires a very personal God whom they can picture and commune

with. Even Jesus did not hesitate to think of God as a Father because he knew that here was an idea that the people could grasp. Indeed the psalmists thought that they were paying God a compliment because they always thought of Him as the highest representative of the qualities which they most highly honored in their fellow beings. Dr. C. E. Jefferson says,¹ "Divine shepherdhood was one of the steps in the shining stairway up which the world climbed to the idea of divine fatherhood. Everything that the psalmist calls God, a sheep might call its

The psalmists loved to think of God as their shepherd because of the great care with which a good shepherd watched over his flock, leading it to water and better pasture lands, driving away or destroying the enemies and protecting it from all harm. God is intensely personal and human in all Hebrew literature and nowhere more so than in the Psalter. "He is here presented as an incomparably great man".²

¹C. E. Jefferson, "The Minister as Shepherd", p. 9.

²J. M. P. Smith, "The Religion of the Psalms", p. 139.

Twenty five Psalms at least credit him with having various parts of the human body. Their God has a face with eyes, ears, nose and mouth.¹ He has arms, hands and feet.² Then too their God apparantly has a body that functions as a human body for he breaths, swallows and talks.³ He is also capable of growing weary, for often the psalmists arouse him from his sleep to tell him of their wants.⁴

The ability of the God of the Psalms to become angry and wreak vengeance upon the wicked has already been mentioned in a previous section of this paper. One thing more perhaps should be said in this connection. God is motivated according to the psalmists by the fear that if he does not intervene in behalf of his people his reputation among men will be at stake.

Coupled with the idea that God protects his reputation is the idea that he is a great lover of praise that is directed to Him. In Psalm 74, after a

¹Pss. 80:1, 33:13, 18, 11:7, 34:16, 27:8. .

²Pss. 17:5, 118:15, 138:7, 98:1.

³Pss. 2:5, 18:15, 21:9.

⁴Pss. 73:20, 78:63, 7:6, 35:23.

long wail has gone forth to Yahweh because of his neglect, the psalmist turns suddenly to praising Him. In this manner I think the psalmist hopes to touch the pride and self respect of Yahweh and stir Him to action. Thus we can see that God to them was endowed with the sentiments of man. He was jealous, proud, capable of anger and yet possessing all of the fine enobling qualities such as love, mercy and justice.

It is not strange, that in the troublous times in which the Psalms were written, when various kings were the men of strength and power, that the psalmists looked upon their God as a mighty king and warrior of strength who could vanquish all their foes.¹ Because the kings of old acted as judges in the disputes between their people, the psalmists also called upon Jehovah to be their judge.²

It is possible that these beautiful singers of Israel attributed to God these human qualities in order to make Him real to the people of their times and also

for the added value that the picturesqueness of it gave to their song; but I am strongly inclined to believe that the common people actually did think of God in the terms that have been described.

Sacrifice We come now to one of the most
 interesting subjects of the Old
Testament. The subject of sacrifice. It is interesting because it is one of the standards by which the religious development of a people can be measured. The question to be raised and answered in this section is; does the God of the psalmists require sacrifices? This is a difficult and perhaps an impossible question to answer because the Psalter contains Psalms that are both for and against the institution of sacrifice. Kirkpatrick¹ would have us think that the psalmists were on a very high religious level and scorned the use of sacrifice. J. M. P. Smith and George A. Barton take a different view and say that the psalmists for the most part believed that sacrifices were of value in

¹A. F. Kirkpatrick, "The Cambridge Bible", The Psalms, p. LXIX.

stimulating genuine spiritual worship, but that they must be accompanied on the part of the worshiper by a consuming desire to do the will of God in the affairs of daily life. The sacrifice, then, according to Smith,¹ was an aid to be used in promoting genuine worship but was not essential to it.

T. K. Cheyne in his Bampton Lectures² has the most reasonable explanation for the presence of the sacrificial and anti-sacrificial Psalms in the Psalter. He points out that with the acceptance of the teachings of the Law, new schools of thought came into existence. The growth of these schools was due to the variety in the contents of the Torah. It is in the attitude of the various Psalms concerning sacrifice that these schools are traced. In the Psalter three distinct attitudes toward sacrifice can be recognized. In the first place such Psalms as 4:5, 27:6, 50:5, 51:19, 66:13-15, recognize the institution of sacrifice and see nothing wrong with it. Indeed it is the accepted and required method of

¹J. M. P. Smith, "The Psalms", p. 257.

²T. K. Cheyne, "The Bampton Lectures of 1889", p. 364.

worship. Psalm 119:108 seems to imply that sacrifices are an aid to worship but are not strictly required. The third school takes the opposite point of view from the first by being definitely hostile to sacrifice in any form. They state clearly in Psalms, 40:6, 50:8-15, 51:3-19, that Jhvh not only does not require sacrifices but that he despises them. The views of the psalmists who discouraged sacrifices did not prevail. Though post-exilic Judaism had developed in the synagogue a worship without sacrifice the theory of such worship was not justified by them. It was only a make-shift, as psalm 51 indicates, and the people looked forward to the time when sacrificial worship would be continued in the temple. They believed it to be the true and genuine worship.¹

In general then we may conclude that the psalmists as a whole believed in the use of sacrifices in their worship. Sacrifice was performed as a means of attaining holiness. Holiness they believed came from a careful observance of the law.

¹G. A. Barton, "The Religion of Israel", p. 210.

In a few instances the anti-sacrificial teachings of the prophets found their way into the Psalms but they were not taken seriously by the people.

B. - The Problem of Suffering and Retribution in the Psalms

Introduction It was not until a comparatively late period in the history of Israel that the problem of suffering engaged the attention of her thinkers.¹ It was taken for granted by the people and even by the early Prophets that sin and suffering went hand in hand. Suffering was looked upon as a direct punishment of God for sins committed, either by an individual or some member of his family. It might even be that a whole nation was punished for sins that the people as a nation had committed. Then, too, if no visible sin had been committed their suffering was attributed to the sins of their ancestors. "The ancient Hebrews looked on their disasters as a token

¹A. S. Peake, "The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament", p. 1.

of divine anger which might be kindled by either a national or personal sin or by the mysterious expression of a fitful mood".¹

Let us state briefly the thoughts of the people and their leaders concerning this problem as it appears previous to the period of the exile. We are familiar with the explanations given for the forty-years of wandering in the wilderness before the people of Israel could enter the promised land. We know of the terror that was struck in the heart of Josiah in 621 B. C. when the Deuteronomic Law was discovered.

In the twenty-eighth chapter of this book as we now have it Jehovah promises the people of Israel prosperity, happiness and protection from their enemies if they will obey his commands and worship Him as He wants them to. On the other hand if they fail to do this there is nothing but suffering and destruction in store for them.

The prophet Isaiah set forth with great clearness

¹A. S. Peake, "The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament", p. 1.

his theory of suffering in Chapter 1:19 in which he

states:

"If you be willing and obedient
You shall eat the good of the land;
But if you refuse and rebel,
You shall be devoured with the sword."

In other words Isaiah taught that prosperity was the reward of piety and that suffering was visited upon people as a punishment for sins committed.

Habakkuk during the exile charged God with the maladministration of the moral universe. In this charge he cited cases in Israel's history that disproved the theory put forth by Isaiah. Habakkuk complains in Chapter 1:4 that the wicked are prosperous and rule over the righteous. He cries out for justice and charges that God has allowed justice to go forth perverted.

Close upon the heels of Habakkuk came the writings of the Great Unknown Prophet who wrote Isaiah 40-55. This Second Isaiah worked out a new idea in the, "Suffering Servant theory". To this writer it seemed as though, the suffering of Israel was of vicarious significance and function, and were to work out in the

end for the benefit of the world at large.¹

These theories remained unchallenged until the writer of the Book of Job boldly attacked the problem of suffering. He broke down the traditional dogma so that it was never restored to its original form.

So much then for the history of the problem as it is found in the Old Testament outside of the Psalter. Let us now examine the Psalms and see what theories of the problem of suffering are offered there.

The Psalmists idea Though the Psalms have passed
of the Causes through revisions in which many
 crude ideas have been left out,
it is still possible to trace in them the several
stages in the development of a thought in correspondence
with those that appear in the Prophets.²

Particularly is this statement true with the problem of suffering. Of the one hundred and fifty Psalms in the Psalter about ninety concern themselves

1J. M. P. Smith, "The Religion of the Psalms", p. 71.
2C. A. Briggs, "The International Critical Commentary",
p. XCVI.

in some way with suffering. One might even say that all of the theories on this subject prevalent in the mind of the Hebrews are expressed somewhere within the Psalms that grapple with this problem.

The first Psalm, which is the preface to the Psalter, strikes the keynote of the entire book and states the view of suffering that prevails throughout the book. The Psalter in its opening song gives assurance to the idea that the righteous will prosper and sinners will perish and be like chaff. In the light of such utterances it is certain that some of the psalmists regarded suffering as the direct punishment for sins committed.

Closely allied with this idea is the consciousness on the part of the psalmists of the great conflict that is being waged between good and evil. God has his enemies as well as man. The Jews looked upon their enemies as being also the enemies of their God. In Wellhausen's translation of Psalm five¹ these

¹J. Wellhausen, "Holy Bible" (Polychrome Edition).
p. 3 and 4.

particular points stand out clearly.

O Jhvh, early wilt Thou hear my call,
Early do I come before Thee, and keep watch.
For no God art Thou whom wickedness can please,
With Thee no man who is wicked dares to dwell.
Before thine eyes the arrogant dare not appear;
All evil-doers Thou hatest.
Thou destroyest all those who speak lies;
The man of blood and deceit Jhvh abhors.
As for me, through Thy great goodness, I
 enter Thy house,
And facing thy holy Temple, fall down before
 Thee in awe.
In Thy righteousness lead me, O Jhvh, because
 of my foes,
And before me make Thy path straight.
For in their mouth is nothing trustworthy,
They are inwardly full of destruction;
An open grave is their throat,
Their tongue they make glib.
Hold them guilty, O God!

Make their plots cause their downfall!
 Thrust them down into the throng of their sins!
 For they defy Thee.
 So that all who seek refuge with Thee will
 rejoice,
 Those whom Thou shieldedst will shout for ever
 with joy,
 Those who love Thy name in Thee will exalt.
 For him who is righteous Thou blessest, O Jhvh,
 And as with a crown Thou dost crown him with
 favor.

The closing lines of this Psalm tell us that Jhvh
 blesses the righteous by crowning them with prosperity
 and favor. Who then are the righteous according to
 the psalmists? "Those who lived in harmony with the
 public law and customs of Israel are called righteous".¹
 Since righteousness was believed to be a quality that
 could be attained by a close observance of the laws
 and customs of Israel, we can understand why the

¹Davidson, "The Theology of the Old Testament", p. 273.

psalmists and other writers in the Old Testament make such strong assertions of their own righteousness. It is this peculiar idea of righteousness coupled with their theory of suffering and retribution that gives us the key to many of the Psalms.

The psalmists looked upon Israel as a righteous nation as compared to the heathen whom they called the wicked. "The Israelites are designed as the godly or the pious." "The Hebrew term *anawim* meant those who submit to the will of Jhvh and were called the lowly and humble."¹

The Psalmists	Underlying the theory that suffering
Idea of a	was a punishment for sins committed
Future Hope	and that prosperity was the reward
	of righteousness, was the theory of
	the future hope. They believed in the continuance of
	existence after death but such an existence had no
	moral or religious element in it. Sheol was the place

¹J. Wellhausen, "The Holy Bible", (Psalms in Polychrom), p. 166.

where the dead were believed to congregate. It was a very deep place in the earth as far removed from heaven as possible. In Sheol the dead meet without distinction of rank or condition - the rich and the poor, the pious and the wicked, the old and the young, the master and the slave. There the dead exist without knowledge or feeling. It is a shadowy existence at best, where none who entered could escape.¹

This conception did not allow for a happy future life where rewards could be given to those who lived according to the will of Jhvh. Thus they believed that if justice was to be administered to the righteous it must be given before death came to carry them off to Sheol.

J. M. P. Smith, in his book, "The Religion of the Psalms", has an excellent brief discussion of the psalmists' idea of a future hope.² "To thee Death and Sheol are things to be dreaded (Ps. 69:16, 30:4). In death none think of God or praise Him (Ps. 6:5,

¹Emil G. Hirsch, "The Jewish Encyclopedia", article on Sheol.

²J. M. P. Smith, "The Religion of the Psalms", p. 109-10.

The Solution of the Problem as the Psalmist faced it

In the light of the discussion that has been given thus far; may we consider now the various ways in which the psalmists sought to face the problem of suffering. Psalm thirty-seven counsels patience to the righteous and tells them that soon the judgment of Jhvh will come and destroy the wicked. At this time the community of Jhvh's faithful will come into full possession of their land and rights.

On first thought this Psalm seems to contradict the statement that the psalmists believed that the righteous prospered and that the wicked perished. But when we consider that the psalmists were considering not the individual but the Jewish community, taken over a long period of time, we at once see that there is no contradiction. Psalm thirty-seven brings solace and comfort to the suffering, but no real solution to the problem.

In Psalm forty-nine an additional bit of hope is given to the righteous people who are suffering while

the wicked seem to prosper. Here the psalmist is certain that all the wealth of the wicked cannot save their souls from the oblivion of Sheol. But while they are still alive the godly have the positive comfort that God may deliver them from sudden evil death.¹

The conviction that God is good and that He will take care of the faithful in Israel is nowhere more strongly felt nor more beautifully expressed than in the seventy-third Psalm.

Here the psalmist is fully conscious that the wicked do prosper in both wealth and health, and yet he surmounts the difficulty by a firm faith in the unfailing goodness of God. Listen to the psalmist as he pours out his troubles.²

God is good, and good only, to Israel,

To those who are pure in heart.

Well nigh were my feet gone from under me,

There was nothing to keep my steps from slipping,

¹J. Wellhausen, "The Holy Bible", (Polychrome edition of the Psalm), p. 185.

²Ibid., pp. 74-75.

For I was indignant at fools,
 When I marked the success of the godless;
 Forsooth, nothing have they to endure,
 Their bodies are healthy and sound,
 In the suffering of others they do not share,
 They never are plagued like the rest."

The psalmist continues on to some length, reciting the easy position of the godless, the hard lot of the innocent and the almost hopelessness of the situation, until he looks at the last days of these godless people (18-19).

"It is but on slippery ground that Thou settest
 them

Down to ruin Thou hurlest them.

How in a moment are they turned to nothing!

Gone! indeed by terrors!"

After realizing how God in the end treats the wicked the psalmist bursts forth with his praise (23-28).

Yet do I stay by Thee ever,
 Thou holdest my right hand fast.

'Thou ledest me according to Thy counsel
 And takest me by the hand, after thee.
 Whom have I in heaven?
 Whom beside Thee do I care for on earth?
 My body and my heart pass away,
 But the Rock of my heart and my portion is
 God evermore.

For lo, they who abandon Thee perish,
 Thou destroyest all who break faith with Thee.
 But my happiness lies in my nearness to God,
 In the Lord, Jhvh, I put my reliance,
 That I may rehearse all Thy works."

• The faith of the righteous in the ultimate goodness of God grew out of their assurance that the evil ones were in the end punished. This thought satisfied them because justice had been meted out to their oppressors.

Justice was central in the religion of the Jews and a God who could not punish the oppressors of his people was no God at all in their minds. They were sorely puzzled for a time over this question until they realized that in the end, not the individual but the

Jews as a nation would triumph over their enemies. This thought satisfied them and increased their confidence in Jhvh.

C. - The "I" of the Psalms

History of The early Jewish Commentators and
the Issue Christian interpretators according
 to J. M. P. Smith,¹ agreed that the
"I" of the Psalms referred to the community. There
the problem rested until Calvin interpreted it to
mean the individual. From Calvin's time until now
the question to whom the "I" of the Psalms refers
has engaged the attention of Old Testament scholars.
Smend, W. R. Smith, Driver and Cheyne are of the
opinion that the "I" of the Psalms refers to Israel
as a nation. These authors allow for only three or
four monodic Psalms in the entire collection. Opposed
to this view we find G. B. Gray, Briggs and W. T.

¹J. M. P. Smith, "The Religion of the Psalms".

Davidson quite firmly convinced that the former view is unnecessarily overdrawn. Each of these men allow the partial truth of the statement but they think that the Psalter contains a much greater personal element than Smith, Smend, Cheyne or Driver are willing to acknowledge. In speaking of the Psalms in this connection G. B. Gray says,¹ "Some may have been originally written as national confessions and some originally of a more exclusive character, may have been fitted for use by the community through the addition of liturgical verses." Strictly speaking, then, according to this view the "I" and "my" of the Psalms would now refer to the community even though originally they might have referred to individuals.

In the preface to this paper I said that we were attempting to find out what the Psalms meant to those who first used them in their services of worship in the Second Temple.

It is very important that we know who was meant

¹G. B. Gray, "Critical Introduction to the Old Testament", pp. 140-141.

by the "I" or "my" if we are to interpret the Theology of the Psalms correctly. "For example Psalm 16:10,

"Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol,
Neither wilt thou suffer thy loving one to
see the pit,"

if interpreted individually, may imply a belief in personal immortality; whereas, if interpreted collectively, it implies no more than an assured faith in the future of Israel."¹

There are many references in the Psalms which seem so personal that any interpretation other than the individual interpretation seems impossible. The references to birth (22:9), youth, age and grey hairs (22:5, 88:15) are difficult to interpret in any other way until one understands oriental literature.

Professor McFadyen continues, "It so happens that both these metaphors of age and sickness are used in other passages of the Old Testament where reference is indisputably to the collective Israel."² For age

¹J. E. McFadyen, "The Messages of the Psalmists", p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 27.

see Isaiah 46:3,4, and sickness, Isaiah 1:6. Let us keep in mind that for a long time the religious unit was not the individual but the nation. In the light of this many of the most difficult points of the ego Psalms can be cleared up. There are other Psalms where it is not only expedient but quite necessary to interpret the "I" or "me" as meaning Israel. For example Psalm 118:10 says,

"All nations compass me about",

Psalm 27:3, has a similiar thought. It would be absurd to think that a nation would surround an individual man.

Summary of Arguments	The fact that the early
For the Collective	Jewish commentators and
Interpretation	Christian interpretators
	looked upon the "I" of the

Psalms as referring to the community ought to carry some weight, since, if there were any tradition reaching back into the distant past they would be likely to refute it.

Again may I suggest that in Bible times the

Jewish Community meant everything and the individual was of little value except as he served the welfare of his nation. "The recognition of personal worth and individual responsibility in the sight of God was very slow to come to the fore in Israel."¹

Let me emphasize again the fact that the personification of the Community is very common in the Old Testament.

We see definite Psalms using the personal pronoun when it is certain that no other meaning except Israel is intelligible.

Conclusion What then may we conclude regarding the

"I" of the Psalms. It seems fair to say that although some of the Psalms were written by individuals to express individual emotions when they came to be used in the services of the synagogues or Temple the worshipers looked upon the references in question to mean the Community or Israel. It is my

¹J. M. P. Smith, "The Religion of the Psalms", p. 23.

' Professor Smith was right when he said, "Books about the Psalms may come and go but the Psalms go on forever". To this statement we raise the question why? The answer is, because the Psalms express in a universal language the hopes and aspirations of mankind. They minister to all of his spiritual needs. The Psalms bring solace and comfort to the suffering and disheartened. They give courage and strength to men who are fighting the battles of their conviction. In the Psalter is presented the anatomy of all parts of the human soul; in it are collected sunrise and sunset, birth and death, promise and fulfilment - the whole drama of humanity."¹ Prothero continuing says, "The Psalms, then, are a mirror in which each man sees the motions of his own soul. They express in exquisite words the kinship, which every thoughtful human heart craves to find, with a supreme, unchanging, loving God, who will be to him a protector, guardian and friend."²

¹R. E. Prothero, "The Psalms in Human Life", p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 2.

The Psalms have found their way into the humblest as well as the wealthiest of homes. Peoples of every vocation have used the Psalms and have gained help and inspiration from them. Part of Psalm 16:6, yea, I have a goodly heritage, was used by the ancient family of Beauchamps as their motto. Psalm 8:6-7 was used by an ancient Butcher's Company trade guild.¹

Thou makest him to have dominion
Over the works of thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet;
All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field.

The conventional representation in Christian art of the Wise Men of the East as three kings is founded upon Psalm 72:10-11.

The inscriptions of hospitals, almshouses and public buildings have been supplied by the Psalms times innumerable. At one time and even yet among the very orthodox United Presbyterians only Psalms are

17. E. Prothero, "The Psalms in Human Life", p. 4.

sung in their worship services.

Through conflicts and wars the Psalms have helped the persecuted Christians to bear their suffering, the Huguenots to gain their victories and the proud Scots to win their conflicts.

The Psalms are so universal in their character that I believe it is safe to say that wherever the Bible has been taken men have been touched in some way by their language, imagery and ideas. "With a psalm upon their lips died Wyclif, Hus, and Jerome of Prague, Luther and Melancthon. Philosophers, such as Bacon and Locke and Hamilton; men of science, like Humboldt and Romanes, among missionaries, Xavier, Martyn, Duff, Livingston, MacKay and Lannington; explorers like Columbus, earthly potentates, like Charlemagne, Vladimir Monomachus, Hildebrand, Louis IX, Henry V, Charles V, Henry of Navarre, and Mary, Queen of Scots - have found in the Psalms their inspiration in life, their strength in peril, or their support in death."¹

¹R. E. Prothero, "The Psalms in Human Life", p. 10.

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